Chapter 3

The Middle Ages and the Renaissance

Classical Antiquity: Hellenistic (323 - 31 BCE) & Roman (31 BCE - 476 CE) Worlds

• After Alexander died (323 BCE) → Hellenistic period – wars between Alexander’s generals & their heirs
• Disturbing social change → governors ruled like kings, people avoided political life & turned inwards
• Fear of Tyche (fate)
• Turned away from philosophy & science
• Turned inward to find peace at home & within themselves
• Attracted to mysticism, divine revelation
Therapeutic Philosophies

• People sought *ataraxia* - freedom from disturbance
  – *Eudamon*ia not attainable
• *Tyche* (fate) - unfavorable
• Sought self-control, personal contentment
• Purpose of philosophy → heal the soul
  – Anticipates psychotherapy
    • Leahey’s theme of psychology as religion

Therapeutic Philosophies - 2

• Epicurianism (Epicurus: 341 – 270 BCE)
• No use in philosophy unless it eases suffering of the soul
• Withdraw from world
• Live a quiet simple life of philosophy, friendship, avoidance of strong passions
• No everlasting soul & no life hereafter
Therapeutic Philosophies - 3

Cynicism: Diogenes
- Live naturally & simply, reject society & social conventions
  - “hippies of Hellenism”
- Disregard for pleasure or pain, personal possessions etc in pursuit of virtue
- Suffering caused by false values (material goods, fame etc.)

Skepticism
- Distrusted sense perception
- Truth not knowable. Goal is *aporia* (enlightened ignorance)

Therapeutic Philosophies - 4

Stoicism (Zeno of Citium: 333 – 362 BCE)
- Became philosophy of Roman ruling class
- Universal, not limited to aristocracy or warriors
- Defined mental representation in terms of propositions rather than images.
  - Plato & Aristotle proposed images.
  - Propositions either true or false
  - Logic – combining propositions
Therapeutic Philosophies - 5

→ Logic = rules for reasoning
- Deterministic: Tyche inescapable. Universe based on rational plan (divine wisdom). One had to accept one’s situation.
- Virtue = state of mind, inner mastery of emotions
  - We can control our mental world
  - Strong emotions → over-evaluation of people & things
  - Devalued personal possessions

Therapeutic Philosophies - 6

- Social upheaval, laws varied from place to place. → Invented the idea of personal conscience, inner voice of reason
- Conscience → individuals could know right from wrong.
  - Adopted by Christians
- No personal immortality
# Religion

- One way of coping with difficult world → turn to transcendental world, e.g. religion.
- Turned to divine revelation rather than reason & observation of nature to obtain Truth
- **Gnosticism** (Gnostics were Christians)
- *Gnosis* = knowledge of secret teachings & rituals, secret interpretations of sacred texts
- Gnostic Gospels - writings from time of Christ or shortly afterwards
- Gnostic gospels discovered mid 20th century (Da Vinci Code mentions these)

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# Neoplatonism

Plotinus (204 – 270 CE)
- Universe was hierarchy with supreme unknowable God (The One) at top
- *The One* emanated *Intelligence*, a god who ruled (Plato’s) Forms
- Hierarchy of divine and worldly creatures
- Humans = divine souls in material bodies
- Physical world is poor copy of divine world (Dualism)
Neoplatonism - 2

• Tried to turn people’s eyes away from physical to spiritual
• Soul seen as imprisoned in body
• World of Forms: eternal & immutable, in state of bliss
• Ascetic, pleasures of body to be renounced

Neoplatonism - 3

• Hypatia (355 – 415 CE) - philosopher, wrote on math & astronomy
  – Taught neoplatonism
  – seen as divine and sacred, virgin, renounced sexual pleasure
• Like Gnostics, kept divine secrets to a few initiates
• Rituals ➔ feeling of “one with universe”
• Sought “inner eye” leading to unity with ”The One”
• Bishop Cyril of Alexandria - resented her & had her named as “witch” & murdered
Mystery Cults

- Many mystery cults arose in Near East
- Involved special secret rites (mysteries)→ feeling of unity with ‘god’, revelation of divine truth
- Many ideas incorporated into Christianity
- Mithras - born of a virgin Dec 25, devotees baptized in water, ate meal of bread & wine

Early Christian Thought

- St. Augustine (345 – 430 CE) - combined Neoplatonism, Stoicism & teachings of Jesus Christ (See Chapter 3)
- Discouraged philosophy & inquiry into the nature of things; faith was sufficient
  - Curiosity = “lust of the eyes”
- “It is not necessary to probe into the nature of things…. It is enough for the Christian to believe that the only cause of all created things ... is the One True God.”
Early Middle Ages (Dark Ages) 476 - 1000

- Fall of Roman Empire 476 CE but was breaking down before this
- Barbarian invasions from the east & north from early 400s until around 1000 CE
- After 476 CD, rise of feudalism, farmers tied to land, people much poorer, less literacy & culture.
- Rise of Eastern Empire (Turkey)

Early Middle Ages - 2

- Loss of access to Greek & Roman literature except for Timeaus
- Greek & Roman economy based on slavery
- Lots of slaves available from military conquests
- Greeks valued theoria (philosophy) and denigrated metis (practical work)
- No need to develop better technologies to do work
- Did have military technologies, good engineering skills, & good government
Early Middle Ages - 3

• Later part of early middle ages – some technical advances
  – Heavy plow & horse harness meant that previously unusable land could be farmed.
  – Intellectual advance: application of philosophy(reason) to theology.
  – St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033 – 1109)
    • Rationale argument for existence of God

Medieval Psychology

• **Augustine** (354 - 430)
• Combined stoicism, neoplatonism, Christian faith
• Know God by knowing one’s own soul
• Negative attitudes towards sex, ascetism, in Christian thought - traced to Augustine & Plato
• Neoplatonism: humans between God & material world
  – Senses tied to material world; reason tied to God
Medieval Psychology - 2

• Islamic world - Aristotle’s ideas developed + Islamic medical traditions
• Physicians sought brain structures corresponding to internal senses
• Interior senses – correspond to Aristotle’s faculties:
  – where body & soul meet
• Islamic medicine attempted to relate body structures to mind (or soul)

Ibn Sina (or Avicenna) (980 - 1037)

• Vegetative soul (all living things): reproduction, growth, nourishment
• Sensitive soul (animals & human beings): 5 Exterior Senses, 7 Interior Senses (Mental faculties) & Appetite, + Rational Soul
  – Compare to Aristotle’s 3 interior senses
  – Common Sense (as in Aristotle)
  – Retentive imagination – retains images of objects
Ibn Sina - 2

Interior Senses, cont’d
– Compositional animal imagination – combines images (Think associations between mental images)
– Compositional human imagination – creative imagination (Think unicorns)
– Estimation – intuitions about benefit & harm (evaluation & judgments)
– Memory – stores intuitions from estimations

Ibn Sina - 2

Sensitive soul, cont’d
– Recollection – recalls intuitions from memory
– Info in memory = abstract ideas, general conclusions from experience, not true universal laws
  • Internal senses located in ventricles of brain - Ibn Sina did not do dissections
  • - motivation: appetite - seek pleasure; avoid pain
Ibn Sina (or Avicenna) cont’d

- **Rational soul**: knows general laws, abstract concepts, unique to human soul
- **Practical intellect** - maintains body, controls behaviour, protects contemplative intellect
- **Contemplative intellect** – (Passive Mind) knowledge of generalities learned through experience
- Active intellect was outside human soul
  - Illuminates contemplative mind → knowledge of (Platonic) Forms

The Individual in the Middle Ages

- Anglo-American tradition - emphasis on individual rights & responsibilities, as opposed to rights of the king or state
- Psychology = science of individual (Leahey) rather than science of roles or stereotypes
- Concept of the individual & his or her role depends on culture
- Idea of “the individual” developed in Middle Ages
The Individual in the Middle Ages - 2

- Early Middle Ages: legal status (wife, serf, king etc) determined one’s life; social roles stereotyped
- Neoplatonic universe - everything divinely ordered, including social status.
- Philosophers interested in types & parts of soul not differences between human souls.
- No concept of individual as unique,
- Concept of individual developed in High Middle Ages (1100 – 1350) - portraits, biographies - mirrors
- Interest in individual differences in Psych. Developed in 19th C (Galton)

- End of Lecture